

## STILL MORE WEBSTERIAN ERRORS

DARRYL FRANCIS

Hounslow, Middlesex, England

The August 1972 issue of Word Ways carried an article of ours entitled "Further Websterian Errors". In that article, we attempted to bring to the reader's notice a number of previously uncatalogued errors that appear in the Second and Third Editions of Webster's New International Dictionary, the so-called Unabridged Webster's.

Since that article was written, still more errors have come to light in the Webster dictionaries. Or, to be scrupulously fair to the Third Edition, in Webster's Second Edition. We have unearthed several new errors which we have not seen mentioned anywhere else. Perhaps the reader would be interested in them.

As we pointed out in "Further Websterian Errors", the last thing that a dictionary can afford to do, if it is to maintain its standing in the lexicographic world, is misspell a word. Unfortunately, misspellings abound in the Second Edition. The first that came to our notice since the previous article was MINIENIZE. This supposed word appears beneath the line, between MINIONISM and MINIONSHIP. It is, quite obviously, a misspelling of MINIONIZE, a verb meaning "to make into a servile dependent".

The second new misspelling is MISRESEMBLANC. This is given in a list of words under the prefix entry MIS-. As should be quite clear to all and sundry, this is meant to be MISRESEMBLANCE. That this error occurs only four pages after the MINIENIZE error seems significant. Perhaps, certain individuals had to proofread certain sections of the dictionary prior to its printing. And perhaps those concerned with the letter M were not so up to the task as they should have been. Can anyone comment on this?

Yet a third misspelling in Webster's Second is OVERLOYLATY, given in the list of words under the prefix entry OVER-. This error was brought to our attention by Leslie Card of Urbana, Illinois. We don't know how we overlooked this error, for it occurs quite near OVERLUBRICATIO, noted in our earlier article. Was Webster's proofreader in a postprandial trance when he reached this section of the dictionary?

The fourth new spelling error is slightly different from the previous three. You see, the word JEWELWEED appears, correctly

spelled, on page 1335 of the Second Edition. Yet, in a list of words appearing at the suffix entry -WEED, we find JEWELWEE. It is as if the Webster editors, having spelled the word correctly to begin with, had to go out of their way to misspell it. Anyway, treasure JEWELWEE. It is a letter sequence that you will not see by itself anywhere else.

Another major type of error that the Second Edition perpetrates is misalphabetization. Our previous article pointed out several examples; since then, another one has come to light. Above the line in the G section are the two terms GREAT INQUEST and GREAT INDIAN PLANTAIN. Sadly, that is the order in which the Second Edition lists them. As any seven-year-old will be able to tell you, D comes before Q, and so GREAT INDIAN PLANTAIN should be listed before GREAT INQUEST. Could it be that the editorial board overseeing the preparation of the Second Edition did not have enough seven-year-olds in its composition?

Are there even further errors waiting to be uncovered by diligent Word Ways readers, errors that escaped the editors of the most famous dictionaries in the world? Just think of the prestige of unearthing one or more of these errors. If you know of any that haven't been catalogued in Word Ways, please write and let the editor know of them.

### ONOMASTIRRHEA AT THE TIMES?

Having nothing better to do on a dreary winter afternoon, the members of the Sunday Department of the New York Times (March 3, 1974) invented a few cognates of the word onomastically:

onomasticate: to chew over funny names  
 onomaster: one who onomasticates superbly  
 onomastirrhea: a copious outpouring of funny names  
 onomastectomy: deletion of an item from a funny name list  
 autonomast: one who enjoys his own funny name  
 onomastodon: a large, extinct compiler of funny names  
 onomastoma: the uncontrollable growth of funny names  
 onomasochist: one who derives pleasure from others thinking his name is funny